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ABSTRACT

A study tested the hypotheses that the relative amount of bad news and good news in a newspaper would have corresponding effects on perceptions of the newspaper's community of origin and of the newspaper itself. Five different versions of a realistic four-page newspaper were created, in which treatment of the news stories ranged from an "extremely bad news" issue through "bad," "neutral," and "good," to an "extremely good news issue." Advertising layout and subject matter were identical. The issues emanated ostensibly from the fictitious (but realistically presented) town of Compton, Nebraska. Subjects, 230 college freshman students, read one randomly assigned version of the newspaper and rated the community on 22 characteristics (Community Image Measures) using a five-point scale. The subjects also rated the newspaper on 16 characteristics (Newspaper Image Measures) using a similar scale. The subjects were unaware that the newspaper and the community were fictitious, and that there were different versions of the paper. The hypotheses were overwhelmingly verified. The bad news created a negative image of the community not only on characteristics directly related to the news topics (safety, crime, and violence) but also on general characteristics (standard of living, neighborhoods, and environment). The bad news also created negative perceptions of the newspaper on both news-related characteristics (constructive approach, realistic balance) and general characteristics (trustworthy advertising, editorial staff competence). (Copies of materials used in the study are appended.) (HTH)

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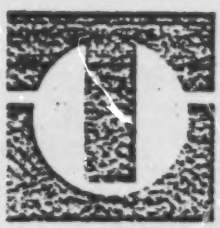

The Effects of Bad News and Good News on Newspaper Image and Community Image

Jack B. Haskins

A paper presented to the Newspaper Division, AEJ national conference, Oregon State University, Corvalis, Oregon, August, 1983.

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ABSTRACT

The Effects of Bad and Good News on
Community Image and Newspaper Image

by Jack B. Haskins

This experiment, sponsored by the ANPA News Research Center, was designed to test hypotheses that the relative amount of bad news and good news in a newspaper would have corresponding effects on perceptions of the community of origin and the carrying newspaper.

Five different versions of a realistic 4-page newspaper were created, ranging from an "extremely bad news" issue through "bad," "neutral," "good" to an "extremely good news" issue. The five different issue-treatments were identical in layout, in advertising content (about 30%), in subject-matter of the news stories, in local-domestic-foreign news origin, and to the extent possible in the specific news stories printed. The only variable was the relative degree of negative and positive treatment of the stories. The issues emanated ostensibly from the fictitious (but realistically presented) town of Compton, Nebraska.

Community image was determined by having subjects rate "Compton, Nebraska" on 22 scales embodying pertinent community characteristics. Each characteristic was rated on a five-step scale, from 1 ("one of the worst communities") to 5 ("one of the best communities"), after the subject read his randomly-assigned newspaper issue.

Newspaper image was determined by having subjects rate the "Compton Times" on 16 scales of newspaper characteristics, on a similar five-step scale. In addition, various demographic and personality characteristics of respondents were determined before the experimental newspapers were seen. The 230 subjects were not aware that different newspaper versions were being presented, nor that Compton was a fictitious community, nor that newspaper ratings would be called for, though it was necessary to structure the purpose of the experiment as "a research study to get your impressions of an unfamiliar community."

Conclusions

(1) The hypotheses were overwhelmingly verified. The bad-good news balance had highly significant corresponding effects on 21 of 22 community image characteristics and on 15 of 16 newspaper characteristics. In short, bad news has negative effects and good news has positive effects on the subjects' perceptions of the community-of-origin and of the carrying newspaper.

(2) Bad news created a negative image of the community not only on characteristics directly related to the news topics (e.g., safety, crime and violence, law enforcement, etc.), but also on general characteristics unrelated to news content (e.g., standard of living, neighborhood attractiveness, clean environment, etc). Good news had corresponding positive effects on both news-related and unrelated characteristics.

(3) Bad news also created negative perceptions of the newspaper on both news-related characteristics (e.g., constructive approach, good influence on community, bias, realistic balance, etc.) and general characteristics (e.g., trustworthy advertising, desirability or subscribing, editorial staff competence, etc.).

(4) An unusual "too good to be true" effect was noted on some community and newspaper perceptions. Most ratings tended to be lowest for the "very bad news" issue, then increase steadily up to the "good news" issue, after which the ratings either declined slightly or remained about the same for the "very good news" issue.

(5) Demographic and personality characteristics of the college student subjects were not significantly related to the obtained effects, though a more heterogeneous group might show different results.

Composite Images (average of all scales) by Newspaper Treatment

	COMMUNITY IMAGE (Mean, 22 scales)					NEWSPAPER IMAGE (Mean, 16 scales)				
ISSUE CONTENTS	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
I. "Very bad news"	XXXXXXX	2.31				XXXXXX	2.12			
II. "Bad news"	XXXXXXXXX	2.78				XXXXXXXX	2.51			
III. "Neutral news"	XXXXXXXXXXX	3.19				XXXXXXXXXX	2.93			
IV. "Good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXX	3.38				XXXXXXXXXXX	3.16			
V. "Very good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXX	3.38				XXXXXXXXXX	3.03			
(Treatment diff.)	(Highly significant)					(Highly significant)				

The Effects of Bad News and Good News on Newspaper Image and Community Image

Does an excessive amount of bad news have a negative effect on the reader's image of the newspaper carrying it? On one's image of the community from which the newspaper originates? On one's response to the advertising in the newspaper?

This experiment, financed by the American Newspaper Publishers Association through its News Research Center, was aimed at answering those questions.

Review of Previous Research

A thorough review of existing evidence has indicated strongly that newspapers and other news media are afflicted with a "bad news" problem of possibly growing seriousness. That evidence (Haskins, 1981a and 1981b) points to these conclusions:

1. There is an increasing impression of "too much bad news" on the part of the general public, social scientists, professional journalists, media critics, and other essayists and writers. Published comments in this vein are especially marked since 1979, judging from the number of references uncovered. Those perceptions are accompanied by an uneasy feeling that this surfeit may be harmful to individuals, the media, and other social institutions.

2. The amount of bad news in the media does, in fact, exceed either good news or neutral news at the present time. The negative imbalance may be increasing, though the evidence is less clear on this point.

3. It is very clear, however, that bad news gets preferred treatment in all news media. It is displayed more prominently than other news, in terms of more space, more pictorial and graphic attention-getting devices, and up-front placement. This extra-prominent display is true for both print and broadcast media.

4. In addition to displaying negative information more vividly, journalists select a disproportionate amount of negative information from the news events available at any given time. Given two versions of the same event, they will select the more negative one.

5. In short, the news media consistently present a negatively distorted picture of the real world. One can only speculate as to the reasons for this. It may be partially due to the priority of conflict, violence and shock value among the axiomatic news values of the journalism trade. Another possible cause is the conventional "news beat" system, which provides regular daily coverage of the trouble centers in our society, including the police, fire, and court systems. It's conceivable that the "hardened journalist" notion is no myth; intensive exposure to the seamy side of life can lead to desensitization, a higher psychological threshold for what is normally perceived as negative (Eysenck & Nias, 1978). Another possible cause is the assumption by journalists that bad news is more interesting than other news and necessary in the increasing media competition for public time and attention.

6. A large proportion of the public is in fact highly interested in reading, hearing, or viewing bad news of many kinds, whether it is relevant to their lives or not. This natural interest is accentuated if the bad news is on a grand scale or concerns familiar situations and objects, or if it is accompanied by positive, pro-social, constructive information. However,

certain other kinds of negative news are relatively uninteresting--for example, trivial crimes, minor accidents and petty theft.

7. "Morbid curiosity" does appear to be a characteristic of the behavior of a significant portion of the population. This manifests itself not only in attraction to bad news but in a fascination with other negative messages such as horror movies, televised violence, sad songs, and tragic plays, to name a few. Many people are drawn to attend the actual scenes of gory accidents, murders, and disasters.

The reasons, or motivations, for morbid curiosity in its many forms are unknown, and little research evidence is found in the literature. However, the trait appears to be a widespread, if not universal, aspect of human nature with longstanding historical and possible biological roots. Recent research and theory in psychobiology and sociobiology provide some promising hypotheses (Haskins, 1982). One hypothesis is that a true biological need exists for stimulation in primitive parts of the brain, leading to a search for vicarious negative stimuli (e.g., bad news) if life is too routine, safe, and boring. A corollary sociobiological hypothesis is that in primitive times alertness to danger (i.e., negative signals) had survival value for our species and persists to this day in an obsolescent form inappropriate to most present situations. It's also conceivable that morbid curiosity is partially a learned or conditioned response, which increases in intensity with increased exposure to negative messages in the mass media; if true, this could lead to desensitization, addiction, and an ever-higher need for exposure (Eysenck & Nias, 1978).

8. Bad news has undesirable effects on individuals. Even a short radio newscast (1-4 items) has immediate negative effects on mood, on attitudes toward other persons, and on helping behavior. News of crime and suicides

in newspapers is followed by an increase in crimes, suicides, and accidents. While certain kinds of personally relevant and important negative information may be useful and even necessary for individual functioning and survival, the great bulk of bad news is probably irrelevant and unimportant in personal lives.

The evidence is fairly conclusive on the harmful effects of short-term exposure to bad news, but there has been no research on the long-term cumulative effects of prolonged exposure to the massive doses encountered by the average individual over many years of media exposure. It is a reasonable hypothesis, however, that long-term negative effects are even greater and more insidious than immediate short-run effects.

The existing evidence, coupled with the speculations above, have led to some specific additional hypothesis on possible effects of bad news on the reader's impressions of the newspaper and the community from which the newspaper originates.

Hypotheses

Since anyone or anything associated with an unpleasant stimulus also comes to be perceived more negatively (Lott & Lott, 1968), it seems likely that bad news may tarnish the reader's attitude toward and image of the carrying newspaper. In light of the relatively low credibility and declining market penetration of U.S. newspapers, particularly among young adults, it seems important to investigate the possible role of excessive bad news in this regard.

It's also reasonable that the local newspaper's contents may affect a reader's attitude toward and image of the community, especially a relatively unfamiliar community. The mobility of the U.S. population makes

this a problem increasingly to be reckoned with. The effects of news on community image should lessen with increased personal contact with the community.

The specific hypotheses investigated in the present study are as follows:

Newspaper Image

H1: The relative amounts of bad, good, and neutral news in a newspaper will directly affect the readers' image of and attitude toward the newspaper.

The effects will be strongest on those newspaper characteristics directly related to the subject-matter of the negative and positive information: perceptions of the bad-good news balance, positive influence of the newspaper, optimistic viewpoint, pleasantness of the information, etc.

To a lesser extent, the bad-good news balance will have a halo or generalized effect on other newspaper characteristics not directly related to news content: perceptions of attractiveness, staff competence, trustworthiness, liveliness, advertising credibility, etc.

This generalized effect will also extend to the overall attitude toward and satisfaction with the newspaper, desirability of subscribing, suitability as a family newspaper, etc.

H1a: The interest in subscribing to or reading a newspaper will be highest for both a highly-negative news issue and a highly positive news issue, with lesser interest for the blander more neutral issues. This hypothesized U-shaped interest response, is based on the presumed stimulation value of extremely intense stimuli in either a positive or negative direction.

H1b: The effects on advertising response (not to be covered in this report) will be mixed. On certain kinds of products related to the subject-matter of negative news--insurance, personal and home protection devices, etc.,--there will be a positive effect if the advertising holds out the promise of counteracting or remedying or otherwise mitigating the negative implications of the negative news.

On certain other kinds of products and services, directly related to negative news content, there will be strong negative effects on advertising response. Hypothesized examples include the makes of cars involved in accidents, airlines related to news of air crashes, and so on.

For products and services unrelated to news content, negative news will create a smaller but generalized negative effect on advertising response.

Community Image

H2: The relative amounts of bad, neutral and good news will directly affect the image of and attitudes toward the community in which a newspaper is published, particularly if the community is relatively unknown to the readers.

The effects will be strongest on those community characteristics most closely related to the subject matter of the negative and positive information--law enforcement, traffic and personal safety, morality, crime and violence, etc.

To a lesser extent, the bad-good news balance will have a generalized effect on community characteristics not specifically

related to news subject-matter--shopping, general environment, prosperity, attractiveness, etc.

This generalized effect will also extend to the overall attitude toward the whole community and its desirability as a place to live.

Intervening Variables

H3: All the effects hypothesized on newspaper, community, and advertising will be enhanced or diminished by various demographic, psychological, and other individual characteristics.

Some relevant demographic variables include age, education, marital status, employment status, sex, and household position.

"General interest in current news events" is probably related to effects. High-news-interest persons will generally rate the newspaper and community more favorably than low-news-interest persons. This difference will be at its greatest for those reading an extremely negative newspaper, at its lowest (and perhaps even reversed) for the extremely positive newspaper.

"Religiosity" is also probably related to effects. Highly religious persons will generally tend to rate the newspaper and community more favorably than the low-religious persons. The more negative the newspaper, the greater this differential in newspaper interest (and perhaps other variables). In other words, newspaper negativism will have a positive effect on the ratings of the highly religious, due to their beliefs about the present world and their expectations of "the life hereafter."

Three personality variables are believed to be specifically related to the effects of negative and positive news. They are

extroversion/introversion, neuroticism/stability, and tough-mindedness (cruel)/tendermindedness, as measured by modifications of Eysenck's scales. While many directional hypotheses might be posed, it is generally predicted that the more negative news will result in more favorable ratings of the newspaper and community by extroverts, neurotics, and toughminded than by their opposite personality types.

The measurement of the various dependent and intervening variables mentioned in these hypotheses was accomplished by questionnaires (in Appendix, and to be described later), measuring:

22 community image variables
16 newspaper image variables
12 demographic variables
15 personality variables
-- A variety of product use, consumer and advertising response variables, primarily for measurement of advertising effects.

The independent variable consisted of five variations of a simulated newspaper from a hypothetical community ranging from an "extremely bad news" to an "extremely good news" version, to be described later and with specimen copies in the appendix.

Summary of Purposes and Hypotheses

The purposes of this controlled experiment are:

(1) To test the effects of varying amounts of good, bad, and neutral news, in a simulated realistic newspaper from a hypothetical realistic community, on the image of and attitudes toward the newspaper and its community. It is predicted generally (but with certain exceptions) that bad news will have a negative effect and good news will have a positive effect on ratings of the newspaper, the community, and the products advertised in the newspaper.

(2) To determine how those effects are modified by certain demographic characteristics of readers (sex, age, education, etc.), general interest in the news, religiosity, and personality characteristics (extroversion, neuroticism, toughmindedness). The general hypothesis is that highly negative newspapers will generally create more negative images and attitudes among most persons but more positive images and attitudes among certain others.

Research Design and Method

The operational plan of the controlled experiment is described below in terms of a standard notational system used in planning and analysis of evaluation research projects (Haskins, 1981).

Subject Population (P1). P1=220 students enrolled in two sections of a freshman level course at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (see "limitations" section of report for a comment on external validity of this group). P1 was randomly divided into five subsamples--P1a, P1b, P1c, P1d and P1e--for assignment to the treatments below.

Treatments (T1-T5). The independent variable "relative amount of bad, good and neutral news" was prepared in the form of five different versions of a realistic 4-page newspaper (The Compton Times) from a fictitious but realistic community (Compton, Nebraska) as follows:

(T1) Treatment/issue 1: "Very bad news"
(T2) Treatment/issue 2: "Bad news"
(T3) Treatment/issue 3: "Neutral news"
(T4) Treatment/issue 4: "Good News"
(T5) Treatment/issue 5: "Very good news"

See "Preparation of Experimental Issues" section following for a description of how all elements except the treatment variable were held constant for all

issues. Also see Figures 1 and 2 for photocopies of the front pages and for headlines in the five test issues.

Dependent variable measures. Two sets of measures representing the hypothesized effects on community image and newspaper image were prepared--22 Community Image Measures (notated as CM1....CM22) and 16 Newspaper Image Measures (designated NM1....NM6). Each of these 38 dependent variables was rated on a five-step scale as follows:

(1) One of the worst (communities/newspapers)
(2) Below average
(3) Average
(4) Above average
(5) One of the best

See Tables 3 and 6 for a listing of the 38 image variables. The following section on "Questionnaire Measures and Scales" describes how these measures were created both from previous image studies and from a priori purposes of this study.

Intervening variables. A variety of demographic, personality and other descriptive measures were included for cross-tabulation, to determine the extent to which individual characteristics modify the effects of the treatments.

Demographic variables (B4-B10) included age, schooling, marital status, occupation, residence ownership, sex, and household position.

The 15 personality variables (E1-E15) comprised extroversion-introversion, emotional stability-instability, and toughmindedness-tendermindedness (psychoticism), each consisting of five scales derived from psychologist H. J. Eysenck's three-dimensional personality theory, as described later.

Other intervening variables included "General interest in news" (B11) and "Importance of religion" (B12), each a four-step scale.

See the questionnaires in the Appendix for more details on all dependent and intervening variables measured.

Experiment administration. All treatments and measurements were administered in one session each to two large groups, in effect two separate complete experiments of 45 minutes each.

After some initial instructions, three separate steps were required. First, subjects filled out Questionnaire Packet No. 1, consisting of "Background Data" (B1-B12), the personality questionnaire (E1-E15) and a product use questionnaire (P1-P13, results not included herein). Next, the five experimental newspaper treatments were assigned in a systematic random fashion as follows: 12345432123[illegible], etc., for each row of about 20 subjects (resulting in somewhat fewer cases for Treatments 1 and 5--a slight miscalculation in administration--but perfectly random nevertheless). They were instructed to scan and read their issues for "at least 10 minutes." Finally, Questionnaire Packet No. 2 was completed by the subjects, consisting of Community Image Questionnaire (CM1-22), Newspaper Image Questionnaire (NM1-16), and Forms W and L (not included in this analysis).

In the oral instructions beforehand, subjects were told only that they were to form some "impressions of a real community in the midwest you have probably never visited." Both observation on the scene and the results confirm that subjects were not aware that different newspaper versions were being presented, nor that newspaper ratings would be called for, nor that Compton was a fictitious community. Subjects were debriefed later on the real purpose of the experience.

See "Instructions for Class" and the questionnaire in the Appendix for the exact details of administration.

Research diagram. The diagram below shows graphically the details and sequence of the experimental procedure just described in terms of a standard notational procedure used in describing research projects (Haskins, 1981).

Figure 3.

	t1	t2	t3
P1a	B1-12 E1-15 P1-13	T1(fx)	CM1-22 NM1-16 Forms W & L
P1b	"	T2(fx)	"
P1c	"	T3(fx)	"
P1d	"	T4(fx)	"
P1e	"	T5(fx)	"

P1a-P1e = five random sub-samples of P1 (220 subject students)
B1-12 = Demographic and opinion intervening variables
E1-15 = 15 personality variables comprising extraversion, emotional stability, and psychoticism scales.
P1-P13 = Product use variables, including moviegoing
T1-T5 = five experimental newspaper variations from "Extremely bad news" (T1) through "Extremely good news" (T5).
(fx) = forced exposure
CM1-22 = 22 community image variables
NM1-16 = 16 newspaper image variables
Forms W & L = identification and leisure questionnaires not analyzed for present report
t1 = minutes 1-15; t2 = minutes 16-25 (approximate); t3 = minutes 26-45.

Preparation of Experimental Newspaper Issues

One of the most important and painstaking parts of the study was the creation of the independent variable--five newspaper issues, varying only in the degree of negative-positive news content while holding all other newspaper and community variables constant. Clearly, the issues had to be as identical as possible on such elements as layout, advertising content, subject-matter

of the news stories, news origin (local, domestic, foreign) and, to the extent possible, in the specific news events presented. Since no existing "real" newspaper could fulfill these requirements, it was necessary to create five fictitious but realistic experimental issues.

Specifications for issues. Within the budgetary limits, it was decided to create and print 4-page tabloid-size issues (pages 1, 2, 15 and 16 from an ostensible 16-page small-community paper). From the presumably unfamiliar and non-newsy midwest, the colorless community of "Compton, Nebraska, just an average small midwestern town," with few if any name or experiential associations, was created out of thin air.

Other criteria specified and fulfilled for the five issues were as follows.

1. Layout must be identical. The logotype, number and size of stories and headlines, pictorial matter, placement, typeface and all other visually apparent makeup and layout variables were exactly alike.

2. Realistic advertising must be identical. In each issue, the 35% of space devoted to advertising consisted of identical ads in identical locations.

3. A realistic balance of news subject-matter, identical in all issues, must be presented in the 30 stories/headlines contained in each issue. To this end, recent content analyses of U.S. newspapers by the Newspaper Advertising Bureau (1978) were used as the criterion in arriving at the approximate proportions of news by story origin and subject-matter, the proportions to be as identical as possible in all five issues:

TABLE 1

Classification of 30 Stories in Each Issue, by Origin and Subject-Matter	No.	%
National politics & government	5	17
State/local politics & government	6	20
Crime	4	13
Accidents/fires/disasters	2	7
Local general news	4	13
Other general news (health, business, human interest, etc.)	6	20
Foreign news	3	10

4. The five issues must vary systematically in the overall negative-positive dimension from "Very bad news" (Treatment 1), to "Bad news" (Treatment 2), to "Neutral news" (Treatment 3), to "Good news" (Treatment 4) to "Very good news" (Treatment 5).

Procedures of issue preparation. The procedure followed in fulfilling all these criteria was an extremely complex trial-and-error process, especially in combining the subject-matter and negativism requirements in a fashion to simulate real news stories. This very time-consuming operation, involving many hundred of man-hours, will be mercifully summarized below.

1. A pool of several hundred news items and articles varying along the negative-positive and subject-matter dimensions was assembled from various sources--newspapers, general magazines, and collections of article specimens.

2. A pool of several hundred fresh and realistically simulated headlines, suitable for "The Compton, Nebraska, Times," was created from the real items by experienced newswriters (graduate students and faculty members).

3. The simulated headlines were shuffled around in a trial-and-error process to fit the subject-matter and negative-positive requirements for the five experimental issues of 30 items each. To the extent possible, the

same headlines were rewritten in varying degrees of negativism-positivism to hold the ostensible news events constant from issue to issue. This extended even to the "Extended Weather Forecast" on Page 1. In some cases an item was suitable for contiguous issues without rewriting.

4. Based on the final 5 sets of 30 headlines each, a master dummy layout applicable to and identical for all issues was prepared, including advertising copy.

5. The headlines were rewritten in final form to fit the layout.

6. Fictitious but realistic news stories of the proper length were written by experienced writers to fit the headlines and layout. (How many hours of creative news-writing is summarized in that one sentence!).

7. A final check on the subject-matter proportions of the final mock-up was tabulated with the conclusion that the desired proportions were nearly identical in all 5 issues.

8. Each issue was content-analyzed along the negative-positive dimension. Every item was rated by 3 coders on a seven-step "News Morbibity Scale" previously created for another study (Mackins, 1981), and weighted by amount of space. Then the mean "bad-good news index" was computed for each issue. This step verified that the five issues did indeed vary systematicaly along the bad news-good news dimension as planned.

Table 2 shows the mean "valence" or "morbidity" rating of the five issues.

As indicated by the mean ratings in Table 2, they did vary in the prescribed linear fashion with an almost equal-intervial scalar result. See the Appendix for the News Morbidity Scale and coding procedure.

9. Finally, to judge the realism of the completed issues, an

TABLE 2

Mean Bad-Good News Ratings of Five Experimental Issues*

	Mean Rating
(T1) "Extremely bad news" issue	-2.27
(T2) "Bad news" issue	-1.69
(T3) "Neutral" issue	+0.15
(T4) "Good news" issue	+1.37
(T5) "Extremely good news" issue	+2.06

*A 7-step scale ranging from minus 3 ("the worst possible news") to plus 3 ("the best possible news"). (Haskins, 1981c)

experienced journalist/academic critically evaluated the appearance and content of the mock-up, with a positive result.

10. 500 copies of each of the 5 experimental issues were printed professionally as tabloid newspapers.

The reader may judge for himself the realism in subject-matter and appearance of the finished products by referring to the complete photocopies of the issues in the Appendix.

Questionnaire Measures and Scales

As described briefly earlier, the measuring instruments consisted of Packet I, administered before subjects read the experimental newspaper, and Packet II administered afterward. Packet I contained three questionnaries: Background Data (Form B), "Haskins' Short-Form NET Preference Scale" (a label designed to obscure the real purpose of personality measurement, Form E), and Product Use Survey (Form P, part of the advertising effects part of the study, responses not included in the present analysis). Packet II contained four questionnaires: Community Image (Form C), Newspaper Image

(Form N), Identification Scale (Form W, results not included herein). Both packets of questionnaires are included in Appendix B.

Background Data (Form B). Background Data consisted of conventional demographic questions plus a four-step "general interest in news" scale and a four-step "importance of religion" scale. Demographic questions included number of persons in household, age, schooling, marital status, employment status, residence payment, sex, and position in household. The news interest scale was an *a priori* creation, while the religion importance scale was taken from a standard Gallup question.

Personality questionnaire (Form E). This questionnaire was designed to measure the three basic dimensions of personality postulated by psychologist H. J. Eysenck--extroversion-introversion, emotional stability (neuroticism), and psychoticism (toughmindedness-tendermindedness). These three dimensions were hypothesized by the investigator to be related to both interest in and effects of "bad news" and other kinds of negative stimuli (Haskins, 1982). In regard to Eysenck's personality theory and research, the following statement is explanatory:

> It is characteristic of his scientific approach that Eysenck... has made explicit his theories as to the physiological basis of his three factors. The E factor (extraversion) is believed to measure the excitation-inhibition balance which, in turn, is related to the arousal of the cortex and the threshold of the individual's reticular activating system. The N factor (neuroticism) is related to individual differences in thresholds of the emotional activation, which is determined by the threshold of the individual's visceral brain, which also determines autonomic reactivity. The P factor (psychoticism) has been less well-defined to date, but, in the normal population, it seems to be related to odd, cruel, antisocial behavior and suspicion and a lack of feeling towards even those close to one. (Eysenck, 1973, p. 25)

Eysenck's own personality inventories consisted of hundreds of questions,

which had been processed through numerous factor analyses and revisions, and reduced to several versions of 90 to 210 items each. For the present purpose, it was necessary to reduce this number drastically, to provide an extremely short test of the three dimensions. Consequently, 15 items from Eysenck's factor analysis (five for each dimension) were chosen on the basis of high factor loadings, disparate subject-matter, and judged relevance to present purpose. From Eysenck's dozens of publications on this topic, two major sources provided the evidence for this choice (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1976; Eysenck & Wilson, 1981).

It should be emphasized that the resulting "NET preference scale," intended to be a quick and easy form for personality measurement based on Eysenck's theory and research, has not been validated against the original scales. However, face validity and other initial assessments made it desirable to try it in the present primitive form, with further development and validation planned for the future. Theory and indirect evidence indicate that these personality dimensions may be extremely relevant for research on "bad news" and the general phenomenon called "morbid curiosity."

Community Image (Form C). In the paucity of published community image scales suitable for this study, 22 community characteristics were postulated on a subjective basis to test certain hypotheses. The hypotheses led to the criteria that (A) some scales should be directly related to the bad-good subject-matter dimension of news content (e.g., personal safety, traffic safety, property safety, crime and violence, drug and alcohol use, etc.), (B) some should be generally relevant to news content (e.g., quality of life, law enforcement, friendliness, morality, family-raising quality, local government, etc.), and (C) some should be of no apparent relevance to news

content (e.g., shopping, environment, recreational quality, attractiveness, health and happiness, etc.). Each of these 22 characteristics of "Compton, Nebraska"--phrased in positive form--was judged by respondents on a five-step scale: One of the worst (communities), below average, average, above average, or one of the best, with scale values of one to five respectively.

The questionnaire in the Appendix gives the exact instructions, working, and scaling procedures used by respondents. It is expected that methodological analysis of this subjectively based scale will lead to refinements for future use.

Newspaper Image (Form N). Several previously used and tested newspaper image scales were available for selection of those characteristics deemed relevant to the present purposes. These included the "Standardized Community Survey" scales developed by Haskins (1969) and Collins (1970) in conjunction with the Newspaper Research Program instigated by the former at Syracuse University, some attitude dimensions developed by Cobbey (1980), and some newspaper image characteristics developed by Burgoon et al. (1981). The criteria for selection of the eventual 16 scales were that (A) some should be directly related to the bad-good news dimension (e.g., good community influence, positive view of events, realistic balance of good and bad events, etc.), (B) some should require objective assessment of the newspaper (e.g., suitability for children, "community watchdog" quality, news trustworthiness, and importance, news bias, etc), (C) some should require subjective assessment (e.g., newspaper's concern for community, friendliness to reader, satisfaction from reading, desire to subscribe, liveliness of information, etc.) and (D) some should represent non-variable newspaper attributes among the five issues (e.g., competence of news staff, trustworthiness of advertising, attractiveness of appearance).

Each of these 16 characteristics of the "Compton Times" was judged by respondents on a five-step scale analogous to the community image measures--from "one of the best" (newspapers) to "one of the worst."

Questionnaire pretesting. Each of the questionnaires for the various intervening and dependent variables went through several cycles of writing, pretesting and modification. The final version, contained in the Appendix, containing all questionnaires was ultimately pre-tested in its entirety, using a real newspaper as the treatment variable on a class of college juniors.

Timetable and Personnel

The complete timetable for this project was as follows:

December, 1980 -- Proposal submitted to ANPA News Research Center
February, 1981 -- Approval of grant from ANPA
March-May, 1981 -- Detailed planning
May-December, 1981 -- Development of questionnaires
November, 1981-April, 1982 -- Development of five experimental newspaper issues
May, 1981 -- Experiment conducted (2 groups)
June-September, 1982 -- Editing, coding, computer tabulation
October-November 1982 -- Report writing

In addition to the Principal Investigator, Jack B. Haskins, a number of professionally experienced graduate students invested hundreds of paid and unpaid hours in completing this operationally complex experiment. These included:

William Dockery, Research News Editor (responsible for planning and for final writing of headlines and news, and final editing)

Sara Stone, Research Production Director (responsible for final makeup)

Paul Wright, Printing Supervisor

Martha Rogers, Research Advertising Director (responsible for advertising creation, makeup and advertising response questionnaire)

Dean Hitt, General Research Assistant (responsible for various research and administration chores, including pretesting, questionnaire reproduction, and administration of the experiment data-gathering)

Emily Edwards, general developmental research assistance

David Williamson, general developmental research assistance

Robert Bohle, News Writer

Alice Gagnard, News Writer

Other undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Communications (pretesting, writing, etc.)

Professor Mark Miller served as Chief Statistician, assisted by graduate student Lewis Walker, in the final stages.

Results

The experimental treatments and questionnaire were administered to 231 students enrolled in two sections of a freshman course at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Some of their characteristics include the following:

--94% were in the 18-24 age group and all were under 35
--95% were single
--38% worked for pay, either part-time or full-time
--11% were household heads
--56% were female, 44% male
--87% claimed either moderate or high interest in news
(13% claimed no interest or a slight interest)
--58% claimed religion was very important or "the most important thing" in their lives
(20% said most important, 38% very important, 28% fairly important, 14% not very important)

In terms of personality characteristics, they tended to be more extroverted than introverted (mean 17.8 on a 5-25 scale with 15 as the theoretical midpoint), more tender-minded than tough-minded (mean 19.4) and at about the midpoint on emotional stability (mean 14.8). No norms are available for this short-form adaptation of Eysenck's original personality scales.

This extremely homogenous group of students is, of course, not representative of the adult population or of newspaper readers in general. However, as is the case with most other experimental studies using students, it is assumed that the relative effects of the experimental treatments are projectable to the larger population. Certainly, evidence on newspaper effects is important for understanding this young and prosperous segment of the population who are of great importance to the newspaper industry.

In the experimental results preceding and following 11 of the original 231 cases were deleted for incomplete data. The remaining 220 cases were distributed over the five treatments as follows: T1, 31 cases; T2, 60 cases; T3, 49 cases; T4, 54 cases; T5, 26 cases. As explained earlier, the disparity in sample sizes was due to an administrative miscalculation in procedure, but the distribution was completely random and the samples were equivalent in terms of all demographic and personality variables.

General conclusions. The major hypotheses were overwhelmingly verified. The bad-good news balance had highly significant corresponding effects on 21 of 22 community image characteristics and on 15 of the 16 newspaper characteristics.

In short, bad news had negative effects and good news had positive effects on the subjects' perceptions of the community-of-origin and of the community newspaper.

Bad news created a negative image of the community both on characteristics directly related to news topics (e.g., safety, crime and violence, law enforcement, etc.) and on general characteristics unrelated to news topics (e.g., standard of living, a place for children, neighborhood attractiveness, clean air and environment, etc.). Good news had corresponding positive effects

on both news-related and unrelated characteristics. The weakest effect, barely missing statistical significance, was on the trait "Recreation and leisure activities" though the tendency was in the predicted direction.

The effects of bad news on newspaper image followed a similar pattern. Bad news created negative perceptions of a newspaper on both news-related characteristics (e.g., constructive approach, bias, realistic balance, good influence on the community, etc.) and general characteristics (trustworthy advertising, desirability of subscribing, editorial staff competence, friendliness, etc.). The weakest, and the only non-significant, effect was on the trait "Attractiveness of appearance."

It bears repeating at this point that the subjects receiving the five different issues were unaware that different newspaper versions were being seen by others, that the newspaper itself was to be evaluated, or that Compton was a fictitious community. They were somewhat conditioned to the community ratings aspect by being told they were to read the paper in order to form some "impressions of a real community in the midwest you have probably never visited."

Effects on Community Image. On all 22 community image traits, the general pattern (with minor rare exceptions) was for the "Very bad news" issue to produce the lowest ratings, with gradually and steadily improving ratings for the "Bad," "Neutral" and "Good" issues, and with little or no improvement for the "Very Good" issue. Table 3 shows the composite image for all characteristics combined, expressing this common pattern.

Table 4 shows all 22 community image characteristics in rank order of the magnitude of effects. Also shown is the ANOVA "F" value which reflects directly the magnitude of effects and the differences created by the bad-

good news variation. This was computed by a one-way ANOVA fixed-effects procedure.

TABLE 3

Composite Community Image By Treatment Issues
(Mean, 22 characteristics)*

News Treatment		
(T1)	"Very bad news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.31
(T2)	"Bad news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.78
(T3)	"Neutral news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 3.19
(T4)	"Good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 3.38
(T5)	"Very good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 3.38

*Means from a 1-5 scale with 1= one of the worst communities" and 5="one of the best communities"

The strongest effects were created on "Good place to raise children," "Traffic safety," "Overall rating of whole community," "Health and happiness" and "Freedom from crime and violence." However, 21 of the 22 community characteristics were strongly affected beyond the .01 probability level. The only community characteristic not significantly affected was "Recreation and leisure activities."

Some of the community characteristics were specifically related to the bad news content (A), some were generally related to content (B), and some were considered unrelated to content (C). These relationships are indicated in Table 4.

The strongest effects were created, as expected, on characteristics specifically related to the news (Mean F = 29.5); the weakest effects were achieved on news-unrelated characteristics (Mean F = 11.3). The most

TABLE 4

Effects of Bad and Good News on Perceptions of the Community

(Note: Listed in rank order of magnitude of the effects. F-value reflects significance of the difference in the 5 treatments.)

Community Characteristic Measures (1-5 Scale)	"F" value
(C14) Good place to raise children (B)**	39
(C6) Traffic safety (A)	36
(C22) Overall rating of whole community (B)	34
(C21) Health and happiness (C)	33
(C12) Freedom from crime and violence (A)	33
(C10) Morality and decency (B)	30
(C5) Friendly peaceable neighbors (B)	30
(C2) Law enforcement (B)	29
(C17) Property safety (A)	27
(C1) Good place to live (B)	23
(C8) Personal safety to walk streets at night (A)	22
(C20) General standard of living (C)	17
(C9) Quality of local government (B)	16
(C13) Attractive neighborhoods (C)	13
(C15) Honest public officials (B)	13
(C4) Clean air and environment (C)	11
(C7) Employment and prosperity (B)	10
(C19) Lack of drug and alcohol problems (B)	10
(C16) Reasonable cost of living (C)	8
(C18) Progressiveness (C)	4
(C3) Stores and shopping facilities (C)	3
(C11) Recreation and leisure activities (C)	1.7NS
COMPOSITE IMAGE, ALL 22 CHARACTERISTICS	57

**A,B,C represent relationship between characteristic and news content. A = specifically related; B = generally related; C = unrelated.

significant finding, however, was that bad news created significant negative effects even on community characteristics unrelated to the content of the news. That is, the tenor of the news had a generalized carryover or "negative halo" effect on almost every aspect of community image--health and happiness, standard of living, attractiveness of neighborhoods, clean air and environment, cost of living, progressiveness, and stores and shopping facilities.

Table 5 shows the 22 community characteristics in the order seen by the respondents, along with the mean ratings of each of the five newspaper issues.

Effects on Newspaper Image. As was the case with the community image, the "Very bad news" issue tended to produce the lowest newspaper image ratings. The ratings then improved steadily, with the "Bad," "Neutral" and "Good" issues. But with the "Very good news" issue, there tended to be a decline in ratings, which might be labeled the "too good to be true" effect. Table 6 shows the composite image for all newspaper traits combined for each of the five issues.

TABLE 6

Composite Newspaper Image by Treatment Issues
(Mean, 16 characteristics)

News Treatment		
(T1)	"Very bad news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.12
(T2)	"Bad news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.51
(T3)	"Neutral news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.93
(T4)	"Good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 3.16
(T5)	"Very good news"	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 3.03

TABLE 5

Community Image Mean Values by Newspaper Treatments

"Compared with other cities you have known, how would you rate Compton..."	Newspaper Issue/Treatment: All combined	Very bad	Bad	Neutral	Good	Very good	F value
(C1) As a good place to live?	2.90	2.03	2.68	2.96	3.33	3.38	23.3
(C2) On law enforcement?	2.89	2.06	2.62	3.22	3.24	3.12	28.7
(C3) Stores and shopping facilities?	2.91	3.00	2.75	2.92	3.13	2.73	22.9
(C4) Clean air and environment?	3.53	2.90	3.42	3.67	3.81	3.69	10.0
(C5) Friendly peaceable neighbors?	3.24	2.29	2.90	3.45	3.80	3.58	29.6
(C6) Traffic safety?	2.94	1.97	2.60	3.14	3.44	3.46	35.6
(C7) Employment and prosperity?	2.91	2.55	2.63	2.83	3.19	3.54	11.1
(C8) Personal safety to walk streets at night?	2.94	1.94	2.57	3.39	3.37	3.27	22.3
(C9) Quality of local governement?	2.91	2.26	2.68	3.14	3.17	3.27	15.9
(C10) Morality and decency?	3.24	2.16	2.95	3.51	3.72	3.69	30.1
(C11) Recreation and leisure activities?	2.80	2.71	2.63	2.86	2.89	3.04	1.7
(C12) Freedom from crime and violence?	2.89	1.68	2.62	3.29	3.35	3.27	33.1
(C13) Attractive neighborhoods?	3.21	2.58	2.95	3.33	3.54	3.65	13.3
(C14) Good place to raise children?	3.01	1.74	2.63	3.31	3.61	3.62	38.7
(C15) Honest public officials?	3.01	2.35	2.85	3.16	3.31	3.23	12.8
(C16) Reasonable cost of living?	3.11	2.77	2.93	3.14	3.35	3.38	7.5
(C17) Property safety?	3.05	2.06	2.85	3.35	3.43	3.38	27.1
(C18) Progressiveness?	2.71	2.71	2.45	2.67	2.80	3.19	3.8
(C19) Lack of drug and alcohol problems?	3.02	2.52	2.78	3.18	3.26	3.38	9.9
(C20) General standard of living?	3.09	2.52	2.90	3.14	3.35	3.54	16.5
(C21) Health and happiness?	3.19	2.19	2.94	3.39	3.68	3.65	33.4
(C22) Overall rating whole community?	3.03	2.09	2.75	3.22	3.48	3.54	34.3

Table 7 shows all 16 newspaper image characteristics in rank order of the magnitude of effects, as indicated by the size of the "F" value. The strongest effects were created on the newspaper characteristics "Good influence on the community," "Suitable for children to read," "Emphasizes a constructive and positive view of events," and "Genuine concern for community well-being." Fifteen of the 16 newspaper characteristics were significantly affected. The only one not affected was "Attractiveness of appearance."

The newspaper image characteristics may be classified into four subjective categories--those directly related to the negative-positive dimension of news (A, 3 characteristics), objective assessment of the newspaper (B, 5 characteristics), subjective response to the newspaper (C, 5 characteristics), and nonvariable characteristics of the newspaper (D, 3 characteristics).

The greatest effects were created on the directly-related characteristics, the smallest on the nonvariable characteristics (editorial competence, trustworthy advertising, attractive appearance). Subjective-response effects were generally larger than objective-assessment effects. The traits in Table 7 are identified as A, B, C and D to document those conclusions.

Table 8 shows the 16 newspaper characteristics in the order seen by respondents, along with the mean ratings for each of the five newspaper issues.

Effects of Demographic and Personality Variables

It was hypothesized that the effects of the different newspaper issues on community image and newspaper image would either be enhanced or diminished by various demographic and personality characteristics, as well as by "general news interest" and "religiosity."

TABLE 7

Effects of Bad and Good News on Perceptions of the Newspaper

Newspaper Characteristic Measured (1-5 scale)	"F" Value
(N7) Good influence on the community (A)	44
(N10) Suitable for children to read (B)	43
(N14) Emphasizes a constructive and positive view of events (A)	43
(N11) Genuine concern for community well-being (C)	34
(N6) Provides a feeling of satisfaction (C)	18
(N3) Friendliness to the reader (C)	16
(N4) Realistic balance of both good and bad happenings (A)	16
(N16) Kind of newspaper you would like to subscribe to (C)	13
(N15) Effectively serves as a "community watchdog" (B)	6
(N13) Trustworthy news reports (B)	6
(N12) Concentrates on covering only important events (B)	4
(N5) Overall competence of reporters and editors (D)	4
(N2) Unbiased coverage of the news (B)	3
(N8) Trustworthy advertising (D)	3
(N9) Lively and interesting source of information (C)	3
(N1) Attractiveness of appearance (D)	0.2NS
COMPOSITE IMAGE, ALL 16 NEWSPAPER CHARACTERISTICS	32

A,B,C,D represent relationship between characteristic and news content

A = directly related to news negative-positive dimension
B = objective assessment of newspaper by subject in "expert" role
C = subjective response to newspaper in "feeling" role
D = nonvariable characteristic of newspaper issues (same in all issues)

TABLE 8

Newspaper Image Mean Values by Newspaper Treatments

"Now what is your rating of this newspaper in terms of..."	Newspaper Issue/Treatment						
	All combined	Very bad	Bad	Neutral	Good	Very good	F value
(N1) Attractiveness/appearance?	2.85	2.88	2.83	2.80	2.89	2.92	0.2*
(N2) Unbiased coverage of events?	2.83	2.44	2.78	2.96	2.89	3.08	3.2
(N3) Friendliness to the reader?	3.11	2.50	2.86	3.29	3.45	3.38	15.9
(N4) Realistic balance of both good and bad happenings?	2.37	1.50	2.10	2.76	2.64	2.81	15.5
(N5) Overall competence of editors and reporters?	2.77	2.50	2.67	2.90	2.95	2.69	3.6
(N6) Provides a feeling of satisfaction?	2.50	1.81	2.16	2.57	2.93	3.12	17.5
(N7) Good influence on the community?	2.79	1.66	2.30	3.18	3.41	3.31	43.6
(N8) Trustworthy advertising?	3.10	2.91	2.97	3.12	3.23	3.31	2.9
(N9) Lively and exciting source of information?	2.39	2.25	2.29	2.20	2.64	2.62	2.9
(N10) Suitable for children to read?	2.82	1.53	2.37	3.16	3.59	3.23	43.4
(N11) Genuine concern for community well-being?	3.02	2.00	2.56	3.39	3.57	3.54	33.6
(N12) Concentrates on covering only important events?	2.65	2.19	2.67	2.90	2.59	2.81	4.4
(N13) Trustworthy news reports?	2.90	2.44	2.81	3.12	3.02	3.00	5.6
(N14) Emphasizes constructive and positive view of events?	2.71	1.59	2.19	3.00	3.43	3.23	42.6
(N15) Effectively serves as a community watchdog?	2.86	2.34	2.73	3.08	3.11	2.88	6.4
(N16) The kind of newspaper you would like to subscribe to?	2.12	1.38	1.83	2.27	2.63	2.42	13.0

To test these hypotheses, two-way analyses of variance were conducted using each of those variables separately.

The results showed, in summary, that none of the demographic intervening variables had a significant effect. That is, the treatment effects were the same regardless of class level (freshman vs. levels), sex (male vs. female), work status (job vs. no job), kind of residence (owners vs. renters), general news interest (slight vs. moderate vs. high) or importance of religion (most important, very important, fairly important or not important).

Additionally, none of the personality variables had a significant effect. The treatment effects were the same regardless of extraversion (high vs. moderate vs. low), emotional stability (high vs. moderate vs. low), and tough-mindedness (high vs. moderate vs. low).

It is conceivable that different results might be obtained in a more heterogeneous group. The present experimental group was extremely homogeneous in terms of age, socio-economic status and religious affiliation.

Summary and Discussion

This experiment, sponsored by the ANPA News Research Center, was designed to determine whether the relative amount of bad news and good news in a newspaper would have corresponding effects on perception of the community of origin and the carrying newspaper.

Five different versions of a realistic four-page newspaper were created, ranging from a "Very bad news" issue through "Bad," "Neutral," "Good," to a "Very good news" issue. The five different issue-treatments were identical in layout, in advertising content (about 35%), in subject matter of the news stories, in local-domestic-foreign news origin, and to the extent

possible, in the specific news stories printed. The only variable was the relative degree of negative and positive treatment of the stories. The issues emanated ostensibly from the fictitious (but realistically presented) town of Compton, Nebraska.

Community image was determined by having the subjects rate "Compton, Nebraska" on 22 scales embodying pertinent community characteristics. Each characteristic was rated on a five-step scale, from 1 ("one of the worst communities") to 5 (" one of the best communities"), after the subject read the randomly assigned newspaper issue.

Newspaper image was determined by having subjects rate the "Compton Times" on 16 scales of newspaper characteristics, on a similar five-step scale. In addition, various demographic and personality characteristics of respondents were determined before the experimental newspapers were seen. The 31 subjects were not aware that different newspaper versions were being presented, or that Compton was a fictitious community, or that newspaper ratings would be called for, being told only that this was a "research study to get your impressions of an unfamiliar community."

Results. The major hypotheses were overwhelmingly verified. The bad-good news balance had highly significant corresponding effects on 21 of 22 community image characteristics and on 15 of 16 newspaper characteristics. In short, bad news had negative effects and good news had positive effects on the subjects' perceptions of the community of origin and the carrying newspaper.

Bad news created a negative image of the community not only on characteristics directly related to the news topics (e.g., safety, crime and violence, law enforcement, etc.), but also on general characteristics unrelated

to news content (e.g., standard of living, neighborhood attractiveness, clean environment, etc.). Good news had corresponding effects on both news-related and unrelated characteristics.

Bad news also created negative perceptions of the newspaper both on news-related characteristics (e.g., constructive approach, good influence on community, bias, realistic balance, etc.) and general characteristics (e.g., trustworthy advertising, desirability of subscribing, editorial staff competence, etc.).

An unusual "too good to be true" effect was noted on some community and newspaper perceptions. Most ratings tended to be lowest for the "Very bad news" issue, then increased steadily up to the "Good news" issue, after which the ratings either declined slightly or remained about the same for the "Very good news" issue.

Demographic and personality characteristics of the college student subjects were not significantly related to the obtained effects, though a more heterogeneous group might show different results.

Discussion. Research shows that many people think the media report too much bad news. While journalists and textbook authors rarely mention bad news as an explicit news value, studies show journalists choose to report more negative events and display them more prominently. A day with lots of bad news is "a good news day." Many journalists, convinced that "bad news is news," are unable to conceive of a news policy that does not give preference to negative events. They may equate conflict, violence and misfortune to importance. Consequently they present a negatively distorted view of reality.

While it is essential for the public to know about much bad news for

self-protection and decision making, much of it is irrelevant and unimportant. Journalists may assume most bad news sells papers and attracts audiences. But they tend to overestimate public interest in bad news.

Another reason for the preponderance of bad news is the traditional system of news beats, which are largely concentrated in community trouble centers--the law enforcement agencies, fire stations, hospital and the courts. Larger news organizations dispatch special correspondents to cover major disasters, rebellions, wars and latent trouble spots. This suggests bad news is easier to spot and gather than more positive information.

Why should journalists be concerned about the emphasis on bad news? Quite simply, because it has demonstrably harmful effects on people. Even a short radio newscast of four items can create depression, create negative attitudes toward other people, and reduce helping behavior. Psychiatric journals report that crime and suicide news in newspapers is followed by an increase in crime, suicide and accidents. During newspaper strikes, crimes and suicides decline.

Journalists may with some justification see their job as reporting the news as they see it, contending it is the audience's responsibility to select what they want and reject the rest. However, the pervasiveness of news makes it next to impossible for the individual to avoid unwanted news, short of complete withdrawal from the media. In order to select the news they want, readers must at least read the headlines of all the rest in order to reject it. There is evidence that mood is affected even by information not consciously recalled. Thus, someone reading only the headlines of a newspaper and consciously deciding not to read any of the stories will still be affected. A similar process undoubtedly occurs during the more passive process of listening to a radio newscast or viewing a television news show.

It's possible that long-term exposure over many years to negative news about government, business and other institutions may lead to disillusionment, pessimism and distrust. In fact, public trust and confidence in the leadership of many institutions (including the media) has been declining for the last two decades, according to public opinion polls.

Journalists may, of course, contend that they are not responsible for the events of government, business and other institutions, and merely report what happens. The fact is, however, that the media are not reporting everything that happens. They are over-selecting the more-negative events and giving them preferential display.

This study has demonstrated still another undesirable effect of bad news that may deserve even more serious consideration from journalists than the arguments just presented.

Bad news damages the newspaper's reputation in the eyes of its readers. The declining credibility and market penetration of newspaper in the past few years may be at least partially due to a bad news bias.

This study shows that a community newspaper emphasizing bad news is perceived by its readers as less desirable to subscribe to, less trustworthy, less important, more biased, less satisfying, less professional and even less effective as a community watchdog. It is also seen as a malevolent influence on the community, less suitable for children, less constructive, lacking genuine concern for the community, less lively, less friendly to the reader, less balanced. Even the advertising is deemed less trustworthy.

Journalists are probably, by and large, unaware of the negative bias in news selection and display that has become intimately interwoven into the conventional wisdom of the trade. The practices are reinforced by the reward system. Journalism schools largely reiterate existing professional practices.

This raises several questions for consideration. Should journalists be concerned with audience effects, particularly if they are harmful even though unintentional? Is it professional and ethical to disclaim responsibility for effects? In a more pragmatic vein, is the negative news bias self-destructive, creating a decline in public confidence not only toward the community, public institutions and the larger society but toward the news media themselves?

Those are questions they should at least be considered in light of the present evidence.

Suggestions for further research. This study was conducted on young college adults, a market segment of great importance to the newspaper industry. These several findings should be verified by a similar study conducted on a more representative cross-section of newspaper reading adults from the general community.

This study employed only one issue of a fictitious newspaper from a fictitious community unfamiliar to the subject. A more generalizable experiment would use real newspapers over a period of time in real communities by residents of those communities. This could only be done by a controlled field experiment conducted in several communities simultaneously, with systematic variation of the bad and good news content of those papers over time. This would require the cooperation of editors in those communities and considerable time and research funds--difficult but possible. Such field experiments are routinely conducted for advertising purposes. Can newspapers afford to neglect similar studies to determine news effects?

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Appendix A

Valence (Bad-Good) Rating* of Test Issues

TEST ISSUE	1	2	3	4	TOTAL 4 ps.
1 (Very bad)	-2.82	-2.00	-2.07	-2.15	-2.27
2 (Bad)	-1.30	-1.60	-2.07	-2.15	-1.69
3 (Neutral)	-0.01	-0.31	+0.99	-0.49	+0.15
4 (Good)	+1.13	+1.35	+1.05	+1.94	+1.37
5 (Very good)	+2.00	+2.10	+2.19	+1.96	+2.06

* Valence is the positive or negative directionality of an item as judged by objective coders. A positive rating represents good news, a negative rating indicates bad news, with the magnitude of the number representing the degree of positive or negative valence.

The valence rating scale extends from minus 3 (-3) for "Extremely bad" to plus 3 (+3) for "Extremely good," with the midpoint between the two, zero, representing a perfectly neutral item, neither good nor bad.

The valence rating of the test issues was computed in the following manner:

(1) All news headlines were rated by three coders on the +3 to -3 valence scale, and these ratings were averaged. A lengthy set of instructions for coding was read by each coder prior to the rating procedure (See "Coding Instructions for the Bad News-Good News Rating Scale," by J.B. Haskins, Jan. 1982, for exact procedures). Reliability of coders was determined by comparing ratings of 25 test items with criterion values before coders were assigned to newspaper test items.

(2) The amount of space occupied by each news item in the test issues (text and headline space) was measured after the pages were laid out.

(3) A space/valence index was computed for every item, by multiplying the amount of space by the valence rating (column inches x valence).

Item A: 3 col. in. (x) -2.3 = -6.9
Item B: 5 col. in. (x) +1.7 = +8.5

(4) The valence rating of each page was computed by summing the item space/valence ratings and dividing by the total news space on that page. For example, a page with only items A & B above would have a valence rating of
(-6.9) + (+8.5)= +1.6 +1.6 divided by 8 col.in.= +0.2
Valence rating of the whole issue was computed in the same manner.

FIGURE 1A

"VERY BAD" ISSUE

THE COMPTON

Times

Vol. 56 No. 141
Tuesday, November 18, 1980
The Dependable Daily Since 1923

One ★

Extended Weather Forecast: Worst winter on record to get worse. Sub-zero temperatures, gale winds expected.

Today's Index

Warehouse Owner Burns to Death in Arson/Robbery — page 3

Family Fracas at Daycare Center Leaves 2 Children Dead — page 4

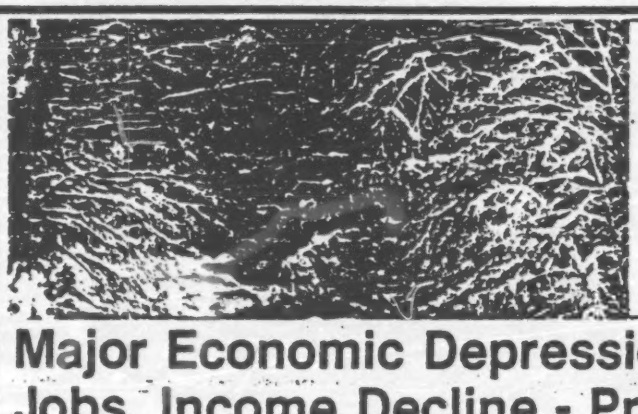
Autopsies Show Three Children Tortured to Death; Killer Sought — page 6

Doctors in Elderly Fraud Case Freed on Legal Technicality — page 8

Wilson Man Killed in Tavern Shooting — page 10

Third Trans-Am Wreck in Month Kills Three Compton Youths — page 12

Gang Dismembers 3 Young Nuns After 2 Week Ordeal of Rape, Starvation — page 14



Yesterday's cold front dropped five inches of new snow on Beaver Creek Canyon, leaving roads impassible for families in the area. Road crews may take a week to reach houses at the upper end of the canyon, officials said.

Major Economic Depression Near; Jobs, Income Decline - Prices Rise

WASHINGTON (UPI)—The nation is facing a depression of proportions equal to or possibly greater than the Great Depression of the 1930s.

This was the prediction today of two of the nation's leading economic thinkers who explained that a depression is inevitable considering the rising unemployment, declining real income and continuing Social Security collapse. Although the economists disagreed on the time factor, both men said a collapse is inevitable.

"It's a snowballing effect," said Dr. Thomas Carlton, a professor of economics at Harvard. "What set the ball in motion was the fiscal irresponsibility of both the federal government and the Federal Reserve System since the last depression. "The resulting high interest rates and inflation stifle the production incentive of American industries, causing high unemployment, which then causes more inflation and so on—ad infinitum. The end result is a depression," he said.

Dr. Aaron Prescott, professor of economics at the University of Southern California, was no less pessimistic.

"Depression is not just an economic term—it's a state of mind of the economy. Just as in the human condition of depression, the economic condition of depression is very hard to treat. At present, the economy is on the verge of a depression and if treatment were to start now it would be too late to prevent it," he said.

Both economists said that the present Social Security collapses would make the depression more severe, especially for the elderly.

Nursing Home Fire Claims 24; 'Screams Terrible,' Sobs Witness

A fire possibly touched off by a cigarette burned through a ramshackled three-story nursing home in Prairies Grove last night, killing all 24 elderly residents.

Units from three volunteer departments and the Compton Fire Department fought the blaze at the Meadowview Rest Home, a private nursing home on Route 233. The fire was reported at 1 a.m.

State and county fire officials began sifting through the charred ruins of the house this morning to determine the cause of the blaze. One official said that the fire may have started in a basement laundry room before spreading to the upper floors, trapping the 24 residents on the third floor.

Several of the residents were confined to wheel chairs, and none escaped the blaze, according to Roger Wilson, chief of the Gordon County Volunteer Fire Department.

"The first and second floors were involved when we got here," Wilson said. "The fire was moving so fast that it cut off the third floor before we could get our ladders set up."

Witnesses said that the screams and cries of the victims could be heard plainly above the roar of the fire.

"It was terrible. You could hear them calling for help and praying and then screaming," said R.M.Gee, a farmer who witnessed the fire. "Then it got quiet, and we knew they was dead."

"Some of the firemen just broke down and cried," he said.

Detective Jack Ripley of the Gordon County Sheriff's Department said that three night-shift employees of the nursing home are being questioned about the cause of the fire. He said that on Sept. 23 last year, Mrs. Lucile Manning, the owner of the home, was cited for improper procedures in allowing employees to smoke in a makeshift laundry under the central stairway of the old house. Ripley refused to comment on other possible causes of the fire.

Gordon County Human Services coordinator Ruth Henson called the fire an

Continued on page 9

40 Passengers Endure Painful, Lingering Death In Crash of Giant Airliner

TRIPOLI, Algeria (AP)—Algerian authorities are investigating the mysterious crash of an Air France jet in the Sahara desert, killing 61 French tourists and a crew of six last week.

Early reports indicate that 27 passengers were killed outright in the crash and at least 40 persons on the flight survived the crash, only to die a lingering death of thirst and heat exposure on the desert around the burned wreckage.

Officials suspect that the crash may have occurred during a hijacking attempt by an unknown terrorist group, sources said.

Authorities could not at first deter-

Continued on page 4

Caps Worst Year Ever for Violence

Crippled Girl Beaten, Raped, Robbed

A 20-year-old woman crippled since a 1979 automobile accident, was beaten, robbed and raped early today, and police are still looking for her assailant, said Captain Frank Brown of the Compton Police Department.

The attack was the 42nd violent incident in Compton and Dawson County this year, making 1980 the most violent year in the county's history, according to police statistics. The previous high of 41 was set in 1932.

The woman told police she was waiting for a Trailways bus at the old Claremun Hotel at 2 a.m. this morning when a man approached her and demanded her purse and watch.

When she refused, the man kicked away her crutches, dragged her into an alley behind the hotel and raped and robbed her, Brown said.

Police are seeking a white man in his early 20s. He was wearing jeans, a black vinyl jacket, and a dark red golf hat, according to police reports.

The incident is the 42nd act of violence in Dawson County this year, topping a record that has stood since 1932, when the county was the scene of a shootout between rival mobs from Omaha and Kansas City. The county recorded 28 volent crimes in 1979 and 26 in 1978.

Continued on page 5

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FIGURE 1B

"BAD NEWS" ISSUE

THE COMPTON

Times

Vol. 56 No. 141
Tuesday, November 18, 1980
The Dependable Daily Since 1923

Two ★★

Extended Weather Forecast: Colder and wetter than usual. Possibility of late spring.

Today's Index

Medi-Scare Con Game Bilks Elderly of $1 Billion — page 3

Home Energy Costs Increase as Comforts Decrease, Despite New Technology — page 4

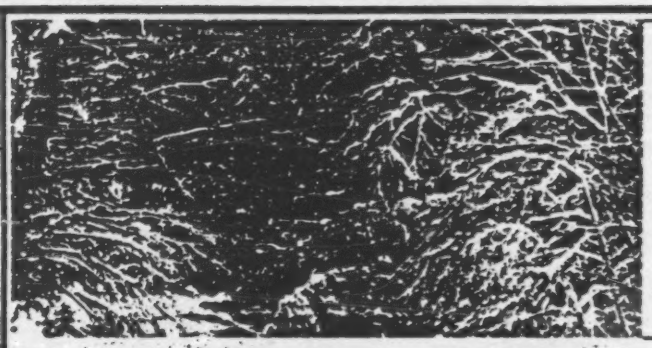
Taxpayers' Money Squandered on Worthless Projects — page 6

Residents Protest River Ridge Water Shortage; Developer Refuses a Meeting — page 8

Debate Team Loses Out in Semi-Finals — page 10

Rail Route Through Compton Ruled Out — page 12

Lane Avenue Home Stripped in Burglary — page 14



Five inches of new snow covers trees and rocks in Beaver Creek Canyon after last night's storm. The new snow will slow road maintenance in the area, officials said.

Economic Indicators Show Recession Still in Force; Living Standard Declines

WASHINGTON (UPI)—The nation's economic indicators declined again for the third straight month, which means the recession is not relenting.

Other figures, released by the Labor Department today, show unemployment on the rise and living standards on the decline. New restrictions on unemployment benefits make it even more difficult for the natin's unemployed to get compensation at a time when they need it most:in the grips of the worst recession since 1973.

Factory workers, some who have fought for years through unions for better working conditions, are now finding themselves taking pay cuts and cuts in their benefits. Many hope this will keep them from ending up like so many of their fellow workers—unemployed.

The gross national product was also down this month. Economists say if it continues failing at the present rate, the GNP will be down 1.5 for the year. A plus -3 is considered to be a fairly healthy economy.

Housing starts dropped during the last month as did investments in new businesses.

Analysts say that the shortage in housing will appear within the next year as a result of the housing slump now. This will drive up the cost of housing at a time when few people will be able to afford it.

A lack of investments in new businesses shows doubt on the part of investors who feel that the recessionary economy is just too dangerous for risky ventures, analysts say.

A White House spokesman, asked if he had any comment on the figures released today, said "I'm afraid you haven't seen anything yet."

Nursing Home Residents Suffer Burns in Fire at Local Facility

Two persons are in critical condition today and five more are hospitalized after a 9 a.m. fire which forced the evacuation of the Prince Avenue Nursing Home and did extensive damage to the building.

Listed in critical condition are Stanley Smith, 71, who suffered third-degree burns on his arms and chest, and Melissa Williams, 83, who apparently had a heart attack during the evacuation of the building, said Compton General Hospital Spokesman Gene Coffman.

R.T. McLendon, 69, Virginia T. White, 73, Eli Wallace, 80, Laura Dean, 69, and Sarah Jane Smith, 77, are in satisfactory condition after suffering smoke inhalation, Coffman said.

Fire officials said the fire apparently started when grease in an untended skillet caught fire, igniting the wall and ceiling of the kitchen.

Mable Petersen, a kitchen employee, said Smith was burned when he tried to lift the skillet off the stove and carry it outside.

"He (Smith) was trying to carry it out, and he started to the door, but he stumbled and spilled it on his chest," Mrs. Petersen said.

Fire officials said that thick black smoke filled one wing of the two-story building within minutes but that smoke-triggered automatic dampers prevented the smoke from entering the other wing. Nursing home employees, aided by police and ambulance crews, evacuated the building.

Nursing home officials said that Mrs. Williams suffered a heart attack as she sat in a wheel chair near other residents awaiting transfer to temporary lodging in the 12th Avenue Community Center.

"We are still trying to find out why

Continued on page 4

Airliner Crash Landing Leaves Several Injured

A chartered DC3 prop plane carrying a group of Iowa farmers crashlanded in a Platte County cornfield today, killing one man and seriously injuring 21 passengers, Platte County rescue officials said.

Severe winds forced the 40-passenger craft down in a field 12 miles north of Alexander near State Route 683, said Jimmy Thompson, captain of the Platte County Rescue Squad.

Thompson said the craft first touched down in an open pasture before bouncing through a fence row and sliding into the cornfield.

"The pilot did a good job of bringing the plane down," Thompson said. "He just couldn't get stopped before he ran out of pasture."

The charter flight was carrying 33 Iowa Grange officials from Iowa City, Iowa, to a convention in Omaha.

Assailant Escapes on Bicycle

Girl Shopper Robbed in Parking Lot

A fourteen-year-old Stone Junior High School student was robbed of several gold chains in an unusual "snatch and run" theft at Northplains Mall last night, according to police reports.

Police said Melanie Anne Taggart, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Taggart, 1424 Wildwood Lane, was waiting on the sidewalk outside Cee Cee Anderson's Boutique when a girl walked her bike up beside Miss Taggart and paused at the curb, apparently waiting for traffic to clear so she could cross the lane.

Miss Taggart told police that the girl looked at both directions of traffic in the parking lot.

"Then she looked past me and sort of gasped. I turned to see what she was looking at and that's when she grabbed my chains," Miss Taggart said.

Miss Taggart said that the girl then jumped on the bike and raced of toward the far side of the parking lot where Miss Taggart lost sight of her in the confusion of cars and headlights.

Mrs. Taggart, mother of the robbery victim, said that the chains were Christmas and birthday presents from Miss Taggart's grandparents and were valued at about $75.

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Figure 1c

"Neutral News" Issue

THE COMPTON

Times

Vol. 56 No. 141
Tuesday, November 18, 1980
The Dependable Daily Since 1923

Three ★★★

Extended Weather Forecast:
Normal temperatures to prevail.
No more surprises in store.

Today's Index

Dawson Resident Reminisces — page 3

Retarded Kids, Lonely Senior Citizens in Jeopardy — page 4

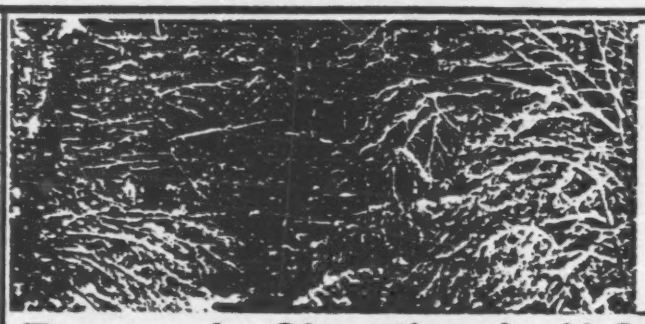
Canada's Civil Conflicts; Talks Set on Issues — page 6

Chips Off the Communist Bloc? — page 8

Calendars Now Available From Kiwanis Members — page 10

Compton Jaycees Name Colier New President — page 12

South American Farm Ministers To Confer — page 14



Five inches of new snow fell in Beaver Creek Canyon last night, bringing the total to 21 inches for the year.

Economic Situation in U.S. Puzzling; Some Indicators Up, Others Drop Off

WASHINGTON (UPI)—There was a mixture of good and bad news with the release today of October's economic indicators—some of the figures were up while others were down, making it difficult for economists to analyze.

The good news was that:

- Interests rates dropped.
- The inflation rate dropped.
- Energy costs remained stable.

The bad news was that:

- Unemployment was up.
- Productivity fell.
- New housing starts were off.

Perhaps the best news was the drop in interest rates. Economic advisors to the administration had fears that their tight money policy would drive interest rates up. Alan Greenspan, the White House economic spokesman, said that the drop may have been caused by less money being borrowed, in which case the recession may be taking its toll on would-be builders and investors.

"The drop in the inflation rate may also be a dubious victory," he said. "It may have been brought about by the high unemployment which lowers demand for consumer goods and causes a drop in their prices. In any case the economic outlook is difficult to pinpoint. We are hoping that the drop in prices stimulates the construction and housing industry. We know that if we ever get this thing going the other way, we can pull ourselves out of this recession."

Other economists are less optimistic.

"It has got to get worse," said Joseph Welch, professor of economics at Georgetown University.

"The economy may get better if you are a businessman, but it will be at the expense of thousands of unemployed," he said.

Officials From Nursing Home Meet To Discuss Patient Care

Nursing home executives from all parts of Nebraska will meet next Monday in Compton for a three-day discussion of ways to encourage community interaction with the elderly residents of nursing homes.

Dr. Robert Daniels, executive director of the Association of Nursing Home Administrators, will be the featured speaker.

"We have called this meeting to explore ways of encouraging more persons to get involed with elderly people in nursing homes in their community," said Mitzi Greene, senior social worker with the Platte County Commission on Aging. "We know that some communities support their elderly more than others, and we want to see if we can make those ways available to all the state nursing home administrators."

Ms. Green said that 45 administrators from 38 public and private nursing homes in the state are scheduled to attend the meeting, which will start at 9 a.m. in the Platte Valley Rodeway Inn in Compton. The meeting will end Wednesday at noon with an address by Daniels, Ms. Green said.

Ms. Green said that boredom, loneliness, and apathy were the chief problems facing elderly persons in nursing homes. She said that all three of these problems could be combatted if more people in the community involved themselves with the elderly.

"All three things are related," Ms. Green said. "The elderly in nursing homes have limited ability to get around, leading to boredom. They also are not able to visit friends and family. Many of their personal friends may be dead leaving them lonely."

Continued on page 4

Airline Pilot Conference To Draw Nation's Aviators

Pilots for small commercial airlines and charter services in the Midwest will gather in Omaha on December 2-5 to discuss new safety procedures being instituted at small airports by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), according to S.M. Smith, president of the Midwestern Airline Pilots Alliance (MAPA).

FAA representatives will present information on new safety procedures designed to increase control over private pilots using public air terminals.

MAPA officials called for the new procedures after several regional charter services complained that private pilots were ignoring safety procedures at local airports, Smith said

Continued on page 6

Seek Means To Provide Citizen Protection

Lawmen To Discuss Crime Prevention

LINCOLN (UPI)—A gathering of Nebraska law enforcement officers will spend next week finding out how modern electronic technology is making crime prevention easier while at the same time providing new tools to criminals.

And the lawmen and women will discover that simple community involvement is still one of the most potent forces in crime prevention.

The conference, jointly sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Nebraska Association of Law Enforcement Officers and the Fraternal Order of Police, will focus on new developments in crime prevention, from electronic surveillance equipment, security systems, and computers to the development of community education and action approaches.

Officers also are learning some of the ways that new technology is being used to commit crimes.

"We have brought this conference together because of the rapid changes taking place in crime prevention," said Curtis Dunnam, executive secretary of the Nebraska Association of Law Enforcement Officers. "The man in the field is tied up with the day-to-day business of enforcing the law and doesn't have time to keep up with the latest means of preventing crime."

Dunnam said the chief advances have been in the areas of surveillance and security systems, making it possible to secure buildings that are subject to frequent breakins.

He said that the use of computers in record-keeping also is aiding law enforcement officials, especially to sp-

Continued on page 5

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FIGURE 10
"GOOD NEWS" ISSUE

THE COMPTON
Times
Vol. 56 No. 141
Tuesday, November 18, 1980
The Dependable Daily Since 1923

Extended Weather Forecast: Sightly warmer and drier coming. Gradual improvement predicted.

Today's Index

Dawson High Student Wins National Merit Scolarship — page 3

Neighborhood Watch Program Effective in Reducing Crime — page 4

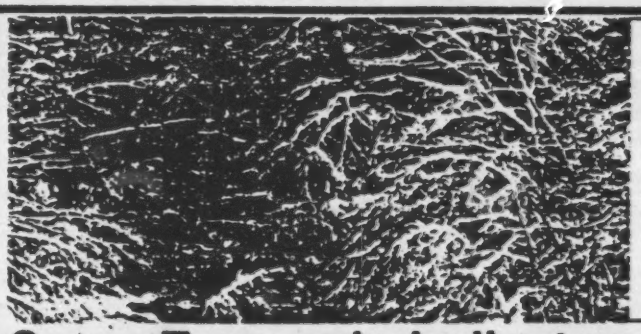
Senior Citizens Big Hit With Kids at Local Community Center — page 6

Improved Energy Technology Decreases Costs, Increases Comfort — page 8

New Hospital Procedures Cut Costs, Speed Recovery — page 10

Quality of Life Rating Improves in Gordon County — page 12

Shipwrecked Family Rescued From Remote Pacific Island — page 14



Five inches of new snow blankets the trees and rocks of Beaver Creek Canyon. A warming trend is expected to melt some of the snow tonight.

Some Economic Indicators Improve; Hopes Increase for End to Recession

WASHINGTON (UPI)—There was good news to report in Washington today—the end to the recession may come soon. The White House released its figures on January's economic indicators and most all showed signs of a strengthening economy.

The inflation rate dropped 1.0 percent which would make the annual rate 8 percent. This is three percentage points lower than last year's rate.

Unemployment was also down one percentage point to just under six percent. This is the lowest it has been since 1976. Economic Advisor Alan Greenspan said the figures mean that over two million jobless Americans have now found work.

Home heating oil and other energy-related products actually fell in price. Gas is nearing the dollar-a-gallon mark once again. Analysts say that the oil glut is not only responsible for the drop in prices but also for the rise in the purchases of new cars—another good sign, they say.

American automobile manufacturers have already called back over 100,000 laid-off workers. Greenspan said that American industries were gaining confidence in the economy once again.

"I think we've finally turned the corner," he said. "The end to the recession is very near. Already we have seen the economy respond to the drop in interest rates—businesses are reinvesting, the stock market is up and people are working again. It's just a matter of time before we're back on our feet and healthy again," he said.

Greenspan went on to say that by mid-summer the recession will have ended.

"The main thing is we've reversed the recessionary psychology. People and businesses are no longer thinking that things will only get worse," he said.

Other figures are due to be released tomorrow and the administration hopes they too will be encouraging.

Nursing Home Safety Improves With New Equipment, Methods

OMAHA (UPI)—Nursing home safety is improving significantly in Nebraska, according to statistics released yesterday by the Nebraska Council on Aging and the state Department of Health.

The number of major and minor fires recorded in public and private nursing homes decreased by 17 percent last year, the report said.

Injuries due to falls declined 34 percent.

Miscellaneous injuries, including cuts and burns, decreased by 12 percent.

"These figures show that our deliberate efforts to promote safety for the elderly are having some effect," said James R. Clifton, Commissioner on Aging with the Department of Health.

Clifton said that the improved fire statistics were the result of increased training requirements for nursing home employees passed last year by the state legislature.

Included in the legislation were funds for smoke detectors in public institutions. Clifton said the smoke detectors also played a role in the improved fire record.

"Probably the most impressive statistic is the drop in the number of falls," Clifton said. "We secured a federal grant to install hand rails in halls and bathrooms in our public institutions, but we had no idea they would have such a dramatic impact."

Clifton said that the state required training also included tornado-warning and storm-warning drills and education for staff members on the dangers of hypothermia for the elderly.

"We consider these statistics significant in light of the national trend, which shows a slight increase in nursing home injuries," Clifton said. "We will be watching this year's performance to be sure that these figures are not a fluke."

Clifton said that the Department of Health would continue to monitor the operation of state nursing homes and would institute new procedures to try to improve the safety record still further.

Continued on page 4

New Procedures Improve Records on Airline Safety

WASHINGTON (UPI)—Procedures instituted at major airports in 1979 are improving air safety records, the Federal Aviation Administration said today.

Statistics compiled by the FAA in 1979 show that incidents involving large airliners and small planes have decreased in frequency and seriousness after the agency instituted new requirements for monitoring and control of small aircraft.

The procedures, developed by an FAA

Continued on page 4

Would-Be Mugger Is Hospitalized

Girl Saves Friend in Mall Parking Lot

Using self-defense tactics learned from her Vietnam veteran father, a 17-year-old Compton girl yesterday beat and then detained a mugger who was attacking her girlfriend.

Susan E. Sondorf, 16, is in good condition today at University Hospital after receiving minor cuts when she was thrown to the ground in the parking lot at Western Plaza Shopping Center.

Police have charged Milton E. Aldridge, 28, 1711 Dewberry Road, with robbery and aggravated assault. He is being held on $5,000 bond.

The hero of the day was Lisa Robinson, 14 New Shore Road, who had accompanied Miss Sondorf shopping, but stayed behind to make a phone call when her friend went to get the car.

When she looked into the parking lot and saw a struggle, she ran to Miss Sondorf's aid, and according to police accounts, "really did the number on the mugger."

"When I got there, Susan was already knocked down, and the guy was going to attack ME," Miss Robinson recalled. "My father always told me that the combination of a knee to the midsection and blows to the stomach and face would incapacitate just about anyone," she said.

Continued on page 4

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FIGURE 1E

"VERY GOOD NEWS" ISSUE

THE COMPTON

Times

Vol. 56 No. 141
Tuesday, November 18, 1980
The Dependable Daily Since 1923

Five ★★★★★

Extended Weather Forecast: Fair skies and warming trend will bring early spring, bumper crops.

Today's Index

Dawson High Student Wins National Merit Scolarship — page 3

Neighborhood Watch Program Effective in Reducing Crime — page 4

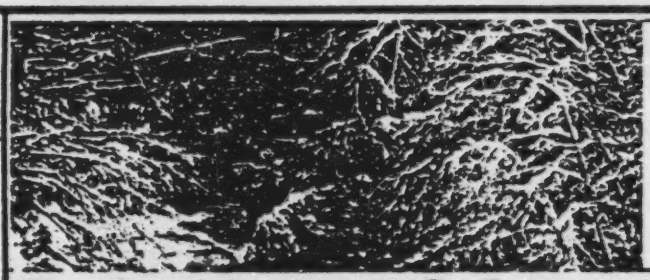
Senior Citizens Big Hit With Kids at Local Community Center — page 6

Improved Energy Technology Decreases Costs, Increases Comfort — page 8

New Hospital Procedures Cut Costs, Speed Recovery — page 10

Quality of Life Rating Improves in Gordon County — page 12

Inexpensive Antibodies Found Effective Against Cancer — page 14



Five inches of new snow decorated the trees and rocks in Beaver Creek Canyon last night, making the normally dry canyon a dreamland.

Experts Agree U.S. Prosperity in Sight; Jobs and Income Rising; Taxes Down

WASHINGTON (UPI)—Happy days are here again!

With the latest figures showing more people working and making more money while paying fewer taxes, some economic experts say that the U.S. is entering into an age of prosperity similar to the Roaring 20s.

"The key to this new age will not be hardware, such as automobiles or missiles," said Harvard professor of economics, Jay Hullock, "but rather software—computer programs and the technology to store and retrieve information. Already the U.S. has gotten a good foot-hold in the computer market. As long as we maintain our lead in the field we will continue to prosper," he said.

Now, more than ever, Americans who were recently unemployed but are now working and making good wages can thank the nation's computer industries for their jobs. Economist Richard Harvey, a White House spokesman, credited the industries with pulling the nation out of the recession.

"Because of the increased revenues collected from the computer industries, we were able to cut individual taxes and further stimulate the economy," he said. "The tax cuts gave the economy the momentum it needed in order to get things booming again."

Even Democratic economic experts believe prosperity is just around the corner. Congressman Jon Prichard, the Democratic chairman of the House Committee on Economic Affairs, said, "I don't think it's because of any of the present administration's efforts, but for some reason the economic outlook for the United States is the best it's been in years."

One of the benefits of this new age of prosperity is the prospect of a balanced budget. The White House predicts it will be able to balance the budget within the next three years if the economy keeps picking up.

"We don't want to get our hopes too high, but a balanced budget is within reach," said a spokesman for the administration.

New Smoke Detector Prevents Fire at Compton Nursing Home

OMAHA (UPI)—A smoke alarm installed only a month ago is being credited with saving the lives of elderly residents of an Omaha nursing home here yesterday.

The alarm, installed Oct. 20 in a cottage at Meredith Manor Retirement Home on L Street, went off yesterday around 10 p.m., alerting 10 elderly men of an electrical fire in their residence.

The early warning alowed the men to evacuate the building without the aid of nursing home staff members who were in another building, fire officials said.

"We couldn't have asked for better timing," said Captain E.L. Logan. "If the alarm had been delayed to next week, I'm afraid we'd be telling you a whole different story."

Logan said that the smoke alarm sensed an electrical short, which was smoldering in the wall of a stairway, that led to the second-floor bedrooms occupied by the men, who range in age from 66 to 79.

He said the men left the building before the fire broke into the stairwell.

"If they had waited much longer, they would have been stuck on the second floor," Logan said. "The cottage head resident who is on duty at night had left the building to take one man to the infirmary."

The cottage received extensive smoke and water damage, but fire fighters contained the fire in the stairwell, Logan said.

"We are thankful that everyone is okay," said Elizabeth Neutin, administrator of the 150-bed nursng home. "We had planned to install the smoke detectors for weeks. I'm just glad we got them up in town."

She said smoke detectors for each of the home's eight cottages were donated by the Greater Omaha Kiwais Council.

Airline Awards Hawaiian Vacation for Safety Tip Which Saves 300 Lives

NEW YORK (UPI)—Air travel, already rated statistically as the safest method of mass transit, is growing still safer month by month, according to the Association of Air Travelers (ATT).

"Ten years ago, we would not have said this, but airlines are rapidly becoming the safest way to travel," said Randolph Phillips, executive secretary of AAT.

Phillips praised the airline industry and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for implementing and improving safety procedures in U.S. airports.

"At one time, it looked like the airline industry would control the FAA and restrict the improvement of safety procedures, but that is not now the case," Phillips said.

He attributed aroused citizen concern for the willingness of the FAA to implement reforms.

Teen-age Girl Invents Anti-Mugging Device

Women, Elderly Walk Streets Safely

The teenage victim of a masked attacker, determined to produce something constructive after her traumatic experience, yesterday demonstrated to area lawmen an anti-mugging device she invented for her high school science project.

"Women and girls and elderly folks can now walk the streets safely," said Compton High School sophomore Agnes Evert, before a schoolwide assembly whose invited guests included city and county law enforcement officials, local polictical leaders, parents and representatives of local organizations of elderly citizens.

Miss Evert, 16, unveiled her new invention. "The Screamer," plans for whose subsidized distribution have already been announced by local civic groups. The 4-inch-long, cigar-shaped device consists smply orf a tiny tank of compressed air. "It works on the same principle as a whistle," Miss Evert explained to her audience of 600 eager listeners. Even those on the back rows had no trouble hearing the sudden, shrill noise. Two teacherson the front row actually jumped and shrieked when the air was released.

Continued on page 6

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Figure 2a

Headlines for Issue One("Extremely Bad News")

Page 1

(1) Extended weather forecast:
(2) Weather (picture caption), Yesterday's Cold Front
(3) Major Economic Depression Near; Jobs, Income decline-Prices rise
(4) Nursing Home Fire Claims 24; 'Screams Terrible,' Sobs Witness
(5) 40 Passengers Endure Painful, Lingering Death in Crash of Giant Airliner
(6) Caps Worst Year Ever for Violence -- Crippled Girl Beaten, Raped, Robbed
(7) Warehouse Owner Burns to Death in Arson/Robbery
(8) Family Fracas at Daycare Center Leaves 2 Children Dead
(9) Autopsies Show Three Children Tortured to Death; Killer Sought
(10) Doctors in Elderly Fraud Case Freed on Legal Technicality
(11) Wilson Man Killed in Tavern Shooting
(12) Third Trans-Am Wreck in Month Kills Three Compton Youths
(13) Gang Dismembers 3 Young Nuns after 2 Week Ordeal of Rape, Starvation

Page 2

(14) Parents Trapped in Car Crash; Baby's Head Severed in Wreck
(15) FBI Crime Stats show Vandalism, Violence at All-Time High in U.S.
(16) Russians Send Troops into Mideast Locations
(17) Evolution vs. Creation Causes Bitter Feelings
(18) State Highway Commissioner Held in Fraud Case
(19) Mother Deserts New Baby for Addict-Lover
(20) Six Teens Sentenced in Junior High Rape Case
(21) Accidents Over Weekend Injure Nine People
(22) Father, Child Die in House Fire; Arson Feared
(23) Israelis Drive Bedouins to Desert Starvation

Page 3

(24) Millions of Elderly Face Retirement Poverty; Social Security on Brink of Collapse
(25) Disease, Famine, War Headline Forecast for North America, Europe by Year 2000
(26) Haiti: An Agonized Nation Plagued by Corruption, Torture, Bad Government

Page 4

(27) Local Poor Children Suffer at Hands of Bureaucracy-- Budget Cuts Ax Medical Care, School Lunches
(28) Hate America Trend Seen in Terrorist Acts
(29) Desperate Hungarians Losing Additional Freedoms as More Russian Troops Move In, Assume Control
(30) Tribe Now Destitute After Losing Oil Bid

Figure 2b

Headlines for Issue Two ("Bad News")

Page 1

(1) Extended Weather forecast
(2) Five inches of new snow covers trees and rocks (picture caption)
(3) Economic Indicators Show Recession Still in Force; Living Standard Declines
(4) Nursing Home Residents Suffer Burns in Local Facility
(5) Airliner Crash Landing Leaves Several Injured
(6) Assailant Escapes on Bicycle — Girl Shopper Robbed in Parking Lot
(7) Medi-Scare Con Game Bilks Elderly of $1 Billion
(8) Home Energy Costs Increase as Comforts Decrease, Despite New Technology
(9) Taxpayers' Money Squandered on Worthless Projects
(10) Residents Protest River Ridge Water Shortage; Developer Refuses Meeting
(11) Debate Team Loses out in Semi-finals
(12) Rail Route Through Compton Ruled Out
(13) Lane Avenue Home Stripped in Burglary

Page 2

(14) Defective Foreign Car Crashes; Family Sustains Minor Injuries
(15) Visiting Author Takes Potshots at Day-to-Day Life in Nebraska
(16) Russians Send Troops into Mideast Locations
(17) Evolution vs. Creation Causes Bitter Feelings
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Figure 2c

Headlines for Issue Three (" Neutral News")

Page 1

(1) Extended Weather forecast
(2) Five inches of new snow fell in Beaver Creek Canyon (picture caption)
(3) Economic Situation in U.S. Puzzling; Some Indicators Up, Others Drop Off
(4) Officials From Nursing Home Meet to Discuss Patient Care
(5) Airline Pilot Conference to Draw Nation's Aviators
(6) Seek Means to Provide Citizen Protection-- Lawmen to Discuss Crime Prevention
(7) Dawson Resident Reminisces
(8) Retarded Kids, Lonely Senior Citizens in Jeopardy
(9) Canada's Civil Conflict; Talks Set on Issues
(10) Chips Off the Communist Bloc?
(11) Calendars Now Available From Kiwanis Members
(12) Compton Jaycees Name Colier New President
(13) South American Farm Ministers to Confer

Page 2

(14) Manufacturers of Foreign Cars Slate Automotive Conference
(15) Visiting Author Takes Potshots at Day-to-Day Life in Nebraska
(16) State House, Senate Plan Joint Meeting
(17) New Fossil Deposits Found Along Platte River
(18) Common Ground Found in Religious Tussle
(19) Airline, Other Vacation Costs Drop Rapidly
(20) Great Britain Calls For Frank Discussions
(21) Zoning Appeals Board Sets Regular Session
(22) Watercolor Exhibition to Feature Colorful Art
(23) Recital Set To Display Local Talent

Page 3

(24) Farmers Benefit From Increased Demand -- Oil Crisis Stimulates More Sales of Nebraska Corn
(25) Nebraska Native To Assume Position With U.S. Government in Washington
(26) Planning Commission To Consider Numerous Requests At Session

Page 4

(27) Traffic Detours Set at Several Points -- Construction to Close Access to Kearney Pike
(28) School Board To 'Find Own Money' for Needs
(29) Three Candidates Announce Political Intentions
(30) Shorter Skirt Lengths Expected This Spring

Figure 2d

Headlines for Issue Four ("Good News")

Page 1

(1) Extended Weather forecast
(2) Five Inches of new snow blankets the trees (picture caption)
(3) Some Economic Indicators Improve; Hopes Increase for End to Recession
(4) Nursing Home Safety Improves With New Equipment, Methods
(5) New Procedures Improve Records on Airline Safety
(6) Would-be Mugger is Hospitalized -- Girl Saves Friend in Mall Parking Lot
(7) Dawson High Student Wins National Merit Scholarship
(8) Neighborhood Watch Program Effective in Reducing Crime
(9) Senior Citizens Big Hit With Kids at Local Community Center
(10) Improved Energy Technology Decreases Costs, Increases Comfort
(11) New Hospital Procedures Cut Costs, Speed Recovery
(12) Quality of Life Rating Improves in Gordon County
(13) Shipwrecked Family Rescued From Remote Pacific Island

Page 2

(14) Foreign Car Gets Accolades For Good Marks in Safety Area
(15) Iceland Goes 14 Years Without Recording a Single Homicide
(16) State House, Senate Plan Joint Meeting
(17) New Fossil Deposits Found Along Platte River
(18) Common Ground Found in Religious Tussle
(19) Airline, Other Vacation Costs Drop Rapidly
(20) State Legislation Draws Favirable Reviews
(21) Taxpayers Save Billions of Dollars
(22) New 'Multi-Care' Wellness Clinic Successful
(23) Despite Cutbacks, Compton Wins Park Grant

Page 3

(24) Farmers Benefit From Increased Crop Demand -- Oil Crisis Stimulates More Sales of Nebraska Corn
(25) Nebraska Native To Assume Position With U.S. Government in Washington
(26) People in Haiti Happy, Well-Fed, Well-Governed Under Benevolent Rule

Page 4

(27) More School Lunches, Medical Care To Be Provided -- City Budget Increase To Aid Elderly, Children
(28) American Popularity Increases on World Scale
(29) Now-Prosperous Hungary Gaining New Confidence After Deporting Russians; Breaking Communist Tie
(30) Once-destitute Tribe Enjoying Oil Prosperity

Figure 2e

Headlines for Issue Five ("Extremely Good News")

Page 1

(1) Extended Weather Forecast
(2) Five Inches of new snow decorated the trees and rocks (picture caption)
(3) Experts Agree U.S. Prosperity in Sight; Jobs and Income Rising; Taxes Down
(4) New Smoke Detector Prevent Fire at Compton Nursing Home
(5) Airline Awards Hawaiian Vacation for Safety Tip Which Saves 300 Lives
(6) Teenage Girl Invents Anti-mugging Device -- Women, Elderly Walk Streets Safely
(7) Dawson High Student Wins National Merit Scgolarship
(8) Neighborhood Watch Program Effective in Reducing Crime
(9) Senior Citizens Big Hit With Kids at Local Community Center
(10) Improved Energy Technology Decreases Costs, Increases Comfort
(11) New Hospital Procedures Cut Costs, Speed Recovery
(12) Quality of Life Rating Improves in Gordon County
(13) Inexpensive Antibodies Found Effective Against Cancer

Page 2

(14) Foreign Car Wins Safety Award With Low Injury, Accident Rate
(15) FBI Statistics Show Decrease In Number of Rapes, Murders
(16) USSR Pulls Troops Out of Middle East
(17) Mental Illness, Retardation To Be Eliminated
(18) Leukemia Cure Expected Within Decade
(19) New Test Saves Babies From Viral Infections
(20) State Business, Farm Legislation Beneficial
(21) Taxpayers Save Billions of Dollars
(22) New 'Multi-Care' Wellness Clinic Successful
(23) Despite Cutbacks, Compton Gets Parks Grant

Page 3

(24) More Benefits for Elderly, Less Cost to Workers -- 'Miraculous' New Social Security Plan Praised
(25) Futurists Forecast U.S. European Peace, Prosperity and Good Health by Year 2000
(26) Benevolent Government in Haiti Provides Better Jobs, Better-Fed People

Page 4

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